”The trouser is a more empowering pant”

- A corpus-based study on the singular forms of some chiefly plural nouns

ia Tuominiemi
University of Tampere
Faculty of Communication Sciences
English language and literature

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Englannin kielessä on joukko substantiiveja, jotka esiintyvät useimmiten tai lähes yksinomaan monikkomuodossa. Näihin kuuluvat mm. kaksiosaisiin vaatekappaleisiin, työkaluihin tai optisiin laitteisiin viittaavat sanat. Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma tutkii näiden monikkosanojen esiintymistä yksikössä: tavoitteena on selvittää, minkälaisissa teksteissä ja konteksteissa yksikkömuotoja käytetään ja mihin niillä tarkalleen viitataan. Tutkimuksessa raportoidaan myös, mitä Oxford English Dictionary –sanakirjassa mainitaan yksikkömuotojen käytöstä ja niiden merkityksistä kunkin sanan kohdalla.
Aineisto on haettu kahdesta vapaasti verkossa saatavilla olevasta korpuksesta, jotka otettiin mukaan kokonaisuudessaan: The British National Corpusista (BNC), joka edustaa brittienglantia 1900-luvun jälkipuoliskolta, sekä the Corpus of Contemporary American Englishistä (COCA), joka on jatkuvasti päivitettävä ja koostuu nykyamerikanenglannista. Kvantitatiivisten tulosten raportoiminen osoittautui ongelmalliseksi, sillä sanat voivat viitata monenlaisiin, myös ei-kaksiosaisiin objekteihin, ja niiden tarkkaa merkitystä ei aina voi päätellä kontekstinkaan perusteella. Tutkimus keskittyi siis esimerkkien löytämiseen yksikkömuotojen erilaisista käyttötavoista ja johtopäätösten tekemiseen ilmiön yleisyydestä erilaisissa teksteissä.
Aineistosta käy ilmi, että yksikkömuotoja käytetään useimmiten ns. lajimerkityksessä, eli viitattaessa yksittäisten objektien sijaan lajeihin tai kategorioihin. Tämä ilmenee erityisesti muotilehtien teksteissä puhuttaessa yksittäisten vaatekappaleiden sijaan housumalleista tai -tyyleistä. Joskus yksikkömuoto voi viitata myös objektin yhteen puolikkaaseen tai esiintyä ainesanan tapaan. Puhutussa kielessä yksikkömuotojen käyttö vaikuttaa hiukan yleisemmältä kuin kirjakielessä, mutta siinäkin kontekstina on useimmiten muotiin tai kauneuteen liittyvä ajankohtaisohjelma tai keskustelu. Huomattavan usein yksikkömuotoa käytettiin myös rinnastettaessa esinettä toiseen, yksikkömuotoiseen, objektiin. Muutamassa tapauksessa yksikkömuoto esiintyi runollisessa tekstissä loppusoinnun aikaansaamiseksi. Vaikka sanojen yksikkömuodot esiintyvät tyypillisesti erikoisalojen kielessä, niitä havaittiin jonkin verran kaikissa tekstilajeissa.

Avainsanat: monikkosanat, pluralia tantum, korpustutkimus

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1. Introduction

Fashion journalists or salespeople in clothing shops may often be heard talking about *a wide leg trouser*[1] or *a new sweat pant*[2], when speaking of clothing styles; the speaker may actualize this by presenting an individual piece of clothing, but the word form conveys the idea of a category of garments. These phrases can be regarded as exceptional usage of words that we are used to seeing in their plural form, although we probably would not deem such usage unaccebtable or ungrammatical. In dictionaries, however, words such as *trousers* and *pants* appear in the plural, together with the information that the words have no singular form.

The term 'pluralia tantum' is often used of nouns whose "default form" is the plural. Many words referring to clothing for the lower body, together with some names for tools and optical instruments, constitute a special category of pluralia tantum, which will in the present study be referred to as "bipartites", after Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 340); these objects consist of two parts, which is the obvious explanation for the plurality. In Acquaviva's terms, these have a "fixed plural value" (2008, 2). Even though pluralia tantum are derived from stems without the *s*-ending, they "only exist in the plural" (ibid, 15). Grammar books and dictionaries take varying approaches to this, but most refer to them as 'plural only' nouns. Of the grammars consulted for this study, only Huddleston and Pullum (2002) mention "restricted uses" of the singular. There are, however, certain senses and contexts in which the singular forms are used in present-day English, as illustrated by the examples mentioned above. This is the object of the present study.

Wickens (1992, 123) quotes H.L. Mencken, who claims that forms like *pant* and

[1] COCA: 2015 SPOK: NBC
[2] COCA: 2014 SPOK: NBC

trouser "belong to the argot of men's tailors and clothing salesmen" (*The American Language*, 1945), but adds that the forms are by no means limited to a particular variety or argot, and can be found in texts "ranging from books on fashion written by well-educated individuals to articles appearing in medical journals". In his view, although this phenomenon is largely ignored by grammars and dictionaries, there are a number of senses in which the singular forms of bipartite objects (which he refers to as 'binary objects') are regularly used. Wickens' categorisation will form the basis for my analysis. With the help of electronic corpora, my thesis attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

- In what senses are the singular forms used? Do they refer to the object as a whole or to one half or part of it, or something else entirely?
- Which form does the word take when acting as a premodifier, and does that correlate with possible usage of the bare form in other contexts?
- What types of texts do the singular forms typically appear in? Is there a difference in their usage or frequency between spoken and written language?
- Does the evidence gathered in two different corpora – representing British English and American English, respectively – suggest any differences between the two variants in this respect?

In the second chapter I will present an overview of bipartite nouns in English as presented in grammar books, discussing each of the three subcategories in more detail. I will also illustrate what kinds of constructions are used in order to express countability. I will then proceed to the usage of the singular forms and what senses are usually conveyed by them. Chapter 3 discusses the nature of corpus linguistics, its applications in relation to the present study, and the corpora being used as material. The analysis itself is presented in chapter 4, where I will rely on the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) for definitions of the words. The tokens containing the SFs in senses relevant to the study will be placed under the categories

provided by Wickens, where possible, and additions to these categories will be made when necessary. Finally, in chapter 5 I will discuss my findings and draw conclusions, and suggest ideas for further research on this topic.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Bipartite nouns in English

In the case of the majority of nouns in English, plural number is expressed by adding the ending -s or -es to the singular form (Leech and Svartvik 1994, 317). Some countable nouns have irregular plural forms (*feet*, *women*), while some, such as mass nouns (*water*) and proper nouns (*Margaret*) occur only in the singular. Furthermore, there is a group of nouns which are invariably plural, such as *dregs* or *pajamas*, or whose meaning in the singular differs from the plural, such as *contents* (Leech and Svartvik 1975, 319). These are occasionally assigned the term 'pluralia tantum' in grammar books. Acquaviva (2008, 16) posits that this term is no more than a "convenient descriptive label", as such words do not form a grammatical category of words with built-in number specification, and should not be grouped together on the basis of the lack of a singular form. As a class of words, pluralia tantum has "blurred boundaries" (ibid.) Indeed, there is variation in the treatment of these nouns in grammar books as to whether any usage of the singular forms is acknowledged.

The largest group of pluralia tantum in English are words referring to objects with two equal parts joined together (Quirk et al. 1985, 300). The term "bipartites", coined by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 340) will be used here for these words. This group includes names of garments for the lower body and for tools, instruments and optical devices.

Corbett (2000, 174) regards nouns involving "twosomes", such as *scissors*, as "defective", as one of the number forms is missing. These are, however, a special case among pluralia tantum in that they do in fact denote countable entities, although in order to express number contrast the classifier *pair* is required (ibid, 172). Furthermore, while with other types of pluralia tantum the use of the singular form outside of attributive usage (see

2.3.1 below) would simply be considered ungrammatical, bipartites are not so straightforward in this respect. In fact, Acquaviva (2008, 16) maintains that the 'pluralia tantum' status of bipartites is ambiguous at best, as they may even take the indefinite article and singular agreement as in *a garden-shears* or *a curling-tongs*. He does not, however, acknowledge the possibility of dropping the *–s* ending.

Henceforth, the abbreviations SF and PF will be used for 'singular form' and 'plural form', respectively. When the focus is on the morphology of the words, regardless of number concord, I will speak of the 'bare form' and the '*s*-form'.

2.1.1 Names of articles of clothing

Bipartite nouns denoting garments refer to clothes that "are worn over the lower part of the body and cover the legs to varying degrees (or at least provide holes for them to pass through)" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 341). This is probably the most productive class of bipartite nouns: the language of fashion creates new words for clothes while the seasons change, while other words fall out of use or shift their meaning (Norri 1996, 65). *Drawers,* a word that has come to denote a garment for the lower body worn next to the skin (OED, s.v. *drawers*), is now "somewhat dated" (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 341). Some other garment words, such as *bloomers* refer to clothing worn in earlier times (ibid.); according to OED (s.v. *bloomer*) the word refers to women's knee-length trousers or undergarments. Norri (1996, 96) lists over 40 bipartite terms for underwear, in most of which there is indication of the gender of the wearer. Many of these words are conversions from another part of speech (*smalls*, *scanties*, *unmentionables),* or derived in other ways from a word describing the garment (*Y-fronts*, *comb(ination)s*, *passion-killers*).

The significance of the *s*-ending in garment names is, in Wickens' (1992, 119) view, best exemplified by the word pair *corduroy/corduroys*. In *He was dressed in corduroy* the

zero form refers to the material, which can be regarded as “continuous and without definite form or precise limits” (ibid.). Many other such examples exist: *jeans* and *flannels* are included in Huddleston and Pullum’s (2002, 341) list.

There is some regional variation in the use of bipartite garment words. In American English (henceforth AmE), *pants* is synonymous to *trousers*, whereas in British English (henceforth BrE) it usually refers to underwear. *Overalls* is listed as a BrE word in Huddleston and Pullum’s discussion on bipartites (2002, 341), in reference to a garment covering the whole body; in AmE, the SF *overall* is used for this. According to OED, in AmE *overalls* usually refers to protective trousers or leggings worn on top of ordinary clothing. Hence, a ’plural-only’ use for the word occurs in both varieties, but the senses are slightly different. In addition, some words have different spellings in each variety: *pyjamas* (BrE) vs. *pajamas* (AmE), *breeches* (BrE) vs. *britches* (AmE) (ibid.)

Interestingly, words denothing clothing for the upper body are not conceived as bipartite even when they cover the arms; it should be noted that while for the part of the garment covering an arm English has the word *sleeve*, there is no corresponding noun for the part covering a leg (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 341).

2.1.2 Names of tools and instruments

Bipartite words referring to tools usually have ”two mobile parts which come together and move apart” (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 341); Wickens (1992, 99) adds that these are ”hand-actuated” tools. Examples include *scissors*, *clippers*, *pincers*, *pliers*, *scales*, *tongs* and *tweezers*.

Wickens (1992, 100) discusses the nature of these objects in order to determine what motivates the usage of the plural form as default. He points out that in the case of some of these words, the SF and PF refer to two distinct types of tool: *a snuffer* and *snuffers* are both

used for extinguishing candles, but the first consists of a cup and a handle, while the other is similar to scissors in design. A similar pair is *a trimmer/trimmers*; the zero form denotes a kind of saw used for trimming wood, or an electric hedge pruner, while ”in the trade”, *trimmers* are scissors exceeding six inches in length. Again, the scissor-like instrument is the one used in the plural (ibid, 101).

Regional variation may be observed in the case of *scales*, which originally was constructionally bipartite with two trays at the end of a pivoted bar, but nowadays no longer so as a result of changes in design (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 341). BrE favours the plural form, whereas AmE nowadays applies the SF to these objects especially in compounds such as *a kitchen scale* (ibid.). In OED, however, the usage of the SF in the sense of ‘weighing instrument’ is labelled as obsolete (OED, s.v. *scale*).

2.1.3 Names of optical devices

The words *binoculars*, *clip-ons*, *glasses*, *goggles* and *spectacles* are listed by Huddleston and Pullum as belonging to the bipartite category of “optical aids” (2002, 341). Their bipartite nature is derived from the composition of two pieces of glass or other material for the eyes (ibid.) The other grammars consulted, however, include these in the ”tools and instruments” category. The present study will keep to the three categories, as the two words denoting optical devices discussed here (*goggles* and *binoculars*) are arguably semantically equally similar to the garment names as the tool names from the viewpoint of my study, as the results below will demonstrate.

2.1.4 Ways of expressing countability in bipartites

The reference of the PF of bipartites is by default to single objects, as in *I’ve torn my trousers* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 341). There is therefore a need for a special

construction for expressing number contrast. Very often bipartite nouns occur together with the phrase *a pair of*: The *pair*-construction is used with all three categories of bipartites: *a pair of slacks, two pairs of trousers, three pairs of glasses*. This, in Huddleston and Pullum's view (2002, 340), reflects the two-part nature of the nouns. Leech and Svartvik (1994, 319) state that the *pair*-construction converts the words into ordinary count nouns. Quirk et al., however, point out that they differ from other plural nouns in that generally they are not regarded as denoting plural number (1985, 300), although the *s*-morpheme, in Wickens' view, "reflects the awareness of a binary construction" (1992, 100). In the *pair*-construction, as Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 342) put it, the focus is on the individual objects and therefore it would be inappropriate to say, for example, **Pairs of corduroys are no longer fashionable*. It is perfectly acceptable to say *All the scissors need sharpening*, as the reference is to "all members of a definite set of bipartite objects", but whether determiners such as *both* may be applied to the plural forms (e.g. *I'll get both these trousers cleaned*) is "subject to variation between speakers" (ibid.)

In addition, Quirk and Greenbaum (1973, 82) argue that the indefinite article may be used with many of these words, especially when premodified: *a garden shears*, *a curling-tongs*, etc.

2.2 The usage of the singular forms of bipartite nouns

Wickens (1992) has studied a variety of texts published in both Britain and North America spanning a 100 years from the 1890s to the 1990s. He states that there have been very few studies on the usage of the single forms of bipartite objects (which he refers to as "binary objects") in contemporary English (ibid, 99). Wickens finds it surprising that most grammars treat these nouns as invariably plural, when the SFs of bipartite garment names such as *trouser* have appeared in various dictionaries for at least the past 100 years (ibid., 122).

Taylor (2012, 57) points out that in cases where the singular forms of pluralia tantum do exist, they are distinct in meaning from the plural. While that is true for some bipartite nouns as well - an obvious example being *glasses* - it seems that in the case of bipartites the singular forms may be used in several different senses.

The grammars consulted for this study differ somewhat in their discussion on the singular forms of pluralia tantum outside of the attributive usage (see 2.3.1 below). Biber et al. (1999, 289) say that apart from the attributive form and cases in which the meaning of the singular differs from that of the plural, the words appear always in the plural, rendering forms such as *scissor* incorrect. Leech and Svartvik (1994, 318) state that some words are invariably plural "only in certain senses", but do not provide examples. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 342), however, allow that in the case of bipartites, there is a "restricted use" of the singular in reference to types, but not to individual specimens.

2.2.1 Attributive usage

The most common case in which the singular forms occur is in the attributive position, i.e. "premodifying another noun" (Biber et al. 1999, 289): *trouser leg*, *scissor cut*. The reason for singularity in those cases is purely grammatical; however, it is noteworthy that such usage exists where the "bare form is regular", (ibid.), as it possibly motivates the usage of the SFs in further contexts and situations. In her discussion on the usage of English as a lingua franca, Seidlhofer (2011, 147) mentions "regularization by analogy", which occurs in native speaker usage as well. She exemplifies this with the verb phrase **answer to,* where the preposition *to* is added to the verb *answer* analogously to the synonymous verb *reply*, which requires the preposition; as a noun, *answer* may be followed by *to* and thus the form of words is "already sanctioned in standard usage and available for copying" (ibid.). An analogy to the use of the SFs of bipartites nouns may be drawn here: when the SFs of bipartites are familiar to speakers

from the context of premodification, their usage may possibly extend to other contexts as well. In the analysis section below I will attempt to determine whether the usage of the SFs as premodifiers correlates with further usage of the singular forms.

2.2.2 'One half' sense

In the case of garment words like *pants* and *trousers*, the SFs may sometimes be used to signify one half of the garment, i.e. synonymously to the phrases *pant leg* and *trouser leg*. Wickens regards these as back-formations (1992, 120). Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 341) argue that as the two parts of the objects do not function independently, the SF cannot be used to denote just one of them, deeming utterances such as **He had torn his left slack* unacceptable. In the case of *trousers*, however, they allow that the SF is occasionally used in this sense, although this usage would be deemed unacceptable by most speakers (ibid.).

Wickens (1992, 100) notes several instances of the SFs denoting one half of a bipartite tool, including the following from OED, in which *tong* is used of one half of a pair of an instrument:

The beetle trotted down *the kitchen tong*.

The words for optical devices, then, according to Wickens (1992, 137) "exhibit much the same behaviour" as the words belonging to the other two categories, claiming that *glass* or *eyeglass* may designate one of the lenses of a pair of spectacles, or *sunglass* to one of the two tinted lenses of a pair of sunglasses.

A question posed by Acquaviva (2008, 18) in connection with pluralia tantum is perhaps relevant here: "[H]ow semantically distant must singular and plural be, in order to count as lexical items?" In other words, if *trouser* is synonymous to *trouser leg*, it is debatable whether that can be regarded as a form of *trousers*, or a lexical item in itself.

2.2.3 'Species' sense

The most frequent use of the SFs, by far, is the "species sense" in which the reference is nonindividual (Wickens 1992, 123). In this meaning the SF does not refer to a single object but to a type, style or model, at a more abstract level. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 342) provide the following example sentence:

> Ever wondered why someone can't design a flannel-lined jean?

This usage is not only typical of garment names, but of bipartite tool names as well. Wickens points out that in the case of tools the SF is often found in "encyclopedic and historical studies on tools and especially in trade literature" (1992, 104) but goes on to say that this usage is by no means limited to the trade (ibid, 124). Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 342) acknowledge such usage of the SF in reference to types, providing the example *This scissor never needs sharpening*. They, too, state that these forms appear most likely in the language of commerce and e.g. historical surveys of clothing, tools, etc (ibid.).

Speakers often systematically alternate between the singular and plural in order to produce different expressive effects – a sense of the general (a 'species') as opposed to the individual and particular (Wickens 1992, 110); in the following, taken from a tool catalogue, the *pair*-construction is used to visualise an individual tool, whereas the bare form has reference to a species:

> You may not ever need to cut a heavy rope with a pair of shears..
> ...the Knife Edge Shear performs equally well on thin and flimsy material!

This suggests that the use of the *s*-less form is by no means arbitrary.

2.2.4 Generic sense

Hirtle (1982, 104) mentions that with count nouns, a generic sense, when the plurality has been expanded to its "maximum scope", i.e. when no more individuals could be included,

can be expressed by means of the definite or indefinite article, as in *A/The Horse is a useful animal*. According to Wickens (1992, 128), this usage can be applied to bipartites as well; an example of this is "The Trouser throughout History", a title of a chapter from the book *One World of Fashion* by M. D. C. Crawford. As with the 'species' sense, the reason for singularity here is the "degree of abstraction" and distance from the functional binarity of the individual object (ibid). The generic sense is even broader and more comprehensive than the 'species' sense, however, as the concern is not with a group within a class of objects, but the class in its entirety (ibid, 111). Tool names, too, "lend themselves to this kind of usage" (ibid.); an example given is from a cutlery catalogue:

A scissor [--] is one of the most thoughtful, exciting and useful of gifts.

The generic usage applies for the optical instrument names, too, where the sense is obtained at a maximal distance from the individual object with "two adjacent roundnesses" (ibid, 141).

2.2.5 Individual sense

In addition to one half of an object or a species or category, the SFs may also carry individual reference; according to Wickens (1992, 116), they are, "for some speakers in very specific situations", comparable to such ordinary nouns as *knife* and *spoon*, turning the *s*-forms into ordinary plurals.

A similar type of usage occurs, according to Hirtle (1982, 20) in the case of ordinary count nouns, in the language of specific fields (such as that of hunters, conservationists, etc. in a discussion on animals); an example from a story told by a rancher is given:

There were *two bear* in there fishing.

Here, too, the 'layman' might use the default –s form, whereas the speaker "most cognizant of the species as an entity" (ibid.), would place emphasis on collectivity and use the bare form, even though individual animals are being referred to.

2.2.6 'Mass noun' sense

Mass nouns, which are always singular, usually refer to substances, such as *wood*, *water* or *smoke* (Leech and Svartvik 1994, 41). According to Wickens (1992, 131), a "mass noun effect" is produced by the use of *trouser* in the following description of a tall, thin man:

> All the rest was moustache, pelisse, and calico trouser. (OED, s.v. *trousers*)

Here, the word suggests an undefined amount of material without "any definite limits, contours or shape"; the use of the PF here would, in contrast, suggest the mental representation of a pair of trousers (ibid.). Similarly, in the following, *knicker* is used to refer to the part of the garment that is visible (ibid.):

> With old favourites like the jitterbug and the jive..the girls spun like tops and everyone got fast flashes of knicker. (OED, s.v. *jitterbug*)

The following, then, does not refer to an amount of material, but rather to a quality, a "jeanness" (Wickens 1992, 132):

> All in soft, comfortable, easy-care 100% cotton...truly a lot of jean for a little price! (New York Times Magazine, 15 Aug 1976)

This kind of usage of the single forms, albeit rare, is relatively unremarkable considering the fact that many garment words are derived from a mass noun denoting a material by means of adding the plural ending (e.g.*corduroys*); the mass noun sense could just be regarded as a kind of back-formation.

2.2.7 Miscellaneous senses

Furthermore, the SF may also express a degree of generality "which does not constitute a species or class" (Wickens 1992, 130):

> The businessman will wear a white or pastel shirt, an updated classical suit and then go sporty in possibly a jean with mix'n match western jacket [--] (New York Times, 12 Mar 1972)

Wickens (1992, 111) also provides the example sentence *Use it as a plier* from a tool catalogue; here, the idea of an ordinary representative of the category is implied, and the reference is therefore not to any species or category.

Premodification by *each*, *every* or *any* may also result in the use of the singular forms; Wickens (1992, 143) distinguishes this from the 'species' and generic senses, although a sense of generality is implied:

> (a) Don Parker's considerable reputation for uncompromising quality control and "saleability" is sewn-in to every Jaymar pant sold in Canada! (Men's Wear of Canada, Oct 1976)
>
> (b) But any plier which is cracked, broken, sprung, or has nicked cutting knives should be discarded and replaced. (Klein Tools, inc, 1979)

The effect of the bare form in such cases is, again, detachment from "any real situation"; were the unmarked form used instead in (b) that would, in Wickens' view, almost imply that some damaged specimens were to be expected (ibid, 113).

3. Methods and materials

Two electronic corpora, in their entirety, were used as material for the analysis of the nouns selected. This section discusses the nature of corpus linguistics and the benefits of using corpora as well as some issues that may be considered as problematic. I will also introduce the two corpora and discuss their relevance for the present study and compare them in terms of size and content. I will also introduce the Oxford English Dictionary, which was used for the definitions of the words.

3.1 What is corpus linguistics?

Corpus linguistics, as described by McEnery and Wilson, is essentially the ”study of language based on examples of ’real life’ language use” (1996, 1). Nowadays the term corpus practically always refers to a machine readable body of linguistic data (ibid, 17). Not any large body of text can be regarded as a corpus, however; the selection of texts should make sure that the entire language, or a pre-determined variety or subset of it, is represented in such a way that generalisations of language use can be made (Hoffmann et al. 2008, 14).

As a method, corpus linguistics is essentially quantitative: numbers and frequencies of features of language usually play a part in the analysis (Hoffmann et al. 2008, 18). While qualitative analysis is often incorporated, the interest of corpus linguists is typically not in ”establishing a ’butterfly collection’ of idiosyncrasies or peculiar features of language that speakers produce” (ibid.) The present study differs from typical corpus study in this respect; in the case of most of the nouns in question, examples of the usage studied here are infrequent enough so that they can all be studied closely in terms of exact reference, context and text type. Using a corpus does, in other words, also provide the means for analysis that is

essentially qualitative.

Lexicographic research uses, according to Biber et al. (1998, 21), corpus-based techniques for determining, for example, how common a certain word or the different senses of a word are. Such research is also important in dictionary making, but also helpful for students and teachers of language, illustrating how words are used in different contexts.

3.2 The corpora used in this study

3.2.1 The British National Corpus

The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word collection of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, including newspapers and fiction as well as academic texts, and it is regarded as representative of British English of the late 20th century, the newest texts being from 1994. Only British English is included for the reason that the corpus was financed 50% by British government grants, and is was primarily intended as an investment in British industry; however, the corpus has proven more useful as a research resource among academic users (Hoffmann et al. 2008, 13).

Ideally, in the view of corpus linguists themselves, a general-purpose corpus would include a high proportion of spoken texts in relation to written ones (*Reference Guide for the British National Corpus,* 2007*)*. However, as the process of recording and transcribing spoken texts is significantly more expensive than collecting computer-readable written texts, the decision was made in the creation of the BNC to limit the proportion of spoken texts to 10 % of the corpus, i.e. approximately 10 million words; this was viewed as a sufficient amount of data for acquiring statistical data about spoken English (ibid.) Approximately 50% of the spoken corpus is comprised of spontaneous conversations (Crowley 1995, 224). The rest includes samples of spoken language from a range of contextual categories, including both

monologue and dialogue (ibid, 225).

3.2.2 The Corpus of Contemporary American English

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) contains more than 520 million words of text, 20 million from each year from 1990 onwards, and another 20 million is added each year. The corpus is equally divided between spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. The COCA is regularly updated, the most recent texts at the time of the present study being from December 2015. Like the BNC, it is freely available online. In Davies' (2009, 159) view, as the BNC has not been updated since its release, it no longer represents the most recent form of English. One of the aims of the creation of COCA was, then, to compensate for the limitations of the BNC. It should therefore be noted for the purposes of the present study that COCA also contains texts from the past twenty years, while the BNC does not. Nevertheless, the two are appropriate sources of data here first and foremost because in terms of text types, COCA was designed to be "roughly comparable to the BNC" (ibid, 161).

Popular magazines constitute roughly a fifth of the material in COCA; nearly 100 different ones are represented, and they include "a good mix" of different domains (Davies 2009, 161). As the phenomenon being studied can be perceived as typical for, in the case of the garment words, the language of fashion and perhaps in the case of the tool and instrument words of non-fictional texts relating to leisure activities and the household, instances of such usage in written texts could be expected to be found in this part of the corpus in particular. The magazines represented in COCA include, for example, *Men's Health*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Sports Illustrated*.

3.2.3 Comparison of the two corpora

Two different corpora are primarily being used in order to obtain a sufficient number of examples, as the words being studied are, in their singular forms, relatively rare. However, having two corpora representing two different varieties of English provides the means for spotting possible differences between the varieties. Where such differences are noticed in the course of the study, they will be pointed out. Another reason for the use of two corpora is that from the category of words referring to items of clothing, the words *pants* and *trousers* among others were considered eligible for analysis. *Pants* as a synonym to *trousers* is virtually absent in BNC, as the word carries a different meaning in British English, where it usually refers to underwear. The two corpora will be studied separately in terms of the nouns in question (apart from *pant*, which only appears in COCA), and if the results indicate that a given form is used differently or more frequently in one variety compared to the other, this will be taken into account when drawing conclusions, bearing in mind that the imbalance between the sizes of the corpora prohibits a purely quantitative comparison.

3.3 Issues relating to the analysis of spoken language

In the COCA, spoken texts comprise roughly a fifth of the whole body of the corpus. . The spoken part contains mostly unscripted conversations from TV and radio programmes (Davies 2009, 162).

While both corpora contain both spoken and written texts, it should be noted that the distinction is not clear-cut: magazine and newspaper articles, for example, contain plenty of direct quotations from interviews, which would be best regarded as representing spoken language, even though classified as parts of written texts in the corpora. In addition, spoken conversations might occasionally include somebody reading out passages from written texts

or e.g. road signs; although these instances are usually indicated with tags, such as <read> in the case of the BNC spoken corpus (Crowdy 1995, 234). Another example of a way in which the boundary between spoken and written text is not always clear is that texts deriving from TV newscasts are marked as spoken in the corpora, although much of it is scripted. Of course, the question may be posed whether these are always accurately transcribed; this is a particularly relevant question in the case of a study such as this, when the focus is on the smallest possible variation in forms, i.e. the presence or absence of a grammatical ending. One must simply assume that the transcriptions accurately represent what was said on the original recording.

A point to consider is whether deviations from grammatical norms, or pure 'slips of the tongue', occur more frequently in spoken language. Halliday (1985, 76) argues against the tradition of regarding spoken language as "formless and featureless" and full of mistakes, saying that while it may be "tentative and spur-of-the-moment", it is certainly not unstructured; it merely does not allow for revisions and redraftings the way that written language does. The inclusion of spoken texts in the material to be analysed therefore provides the opportunity see whether a particular type of grammatical deviation occurs in spoken language any more often than in published written texts.

3.4 The Oxford English Dictionary

According to OED Online, the Oxford English Dictionary is the most comprehensive dictionary of English, and is widely recognised as an authority on the language. Since 2000, the OED has been available for use online. Contrary to current dictionaries, it is historical in nature, listing all the senses in which the words have been recorded to appear, including nonce-ones (forms coined for a single occasion). The collection of materials for the OED began more than 150 years ago, and it is regularly updated and revised to account for present-

day English usage. It is also intended as descriptive, representing actual usage of words instead of providing guidelines. However, information on when certain usage is or has been popularly regarded ’incorrect’ is included. Therefore it is relevant as a point of reference for the present study, which focuses on exceptional usage of the words. The OED provides several authentic example sentences for each word and, for nouns such as the ones being studied here, discusses whether the plural or the singular form is the ‘default’. What is said about the usage of these nouns is discussed more closely in connection to each word in the analysis section.

4. Corpus analysis

Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 341) mention in their list 20 garment names (i), 14 tool names (ii) and 5 names of optical instruments (iii):

i	bloomers	breeches	briefs	britches(AmE)	corduroys
	drawers	flannels	jeans	knickerbockers	knickers
	overalls (BrE)	pajamas(AmE)	panties	pants	pyjamas (BrE)
	shorts	slacks	tights	trousers	trunks
ii	bellows	clippers	cutters	forceps	nutcrackers
	pincers	pliers	scales	scissors	secateurs
	shears	snippers	tongs	tweezers	
iii	binoculars	clip-ons	glasses	goggles	spectacles

Preliminary searches were run in the corpora on these nouns in order to determine which ones could render results that would be relevant for the study. The OED entries of the words were also used to evaluate where usage of the singular forms might be expected. The selection of nouns is discussed in the subsections on each category of bipartites.

Searches were conducted in each corpus on both the singular and plural forms of the nouns considered eligible for analysis. The search results for the singular forms were then analysed in order to eliminate homonyms (e.g. *pant* as a verb), typing errors (*tong* in the place of *long*) etc. from the total count. Whether the word loses the *s*-ending when acting as a premodifier was also evaluated on the basis of the corpus material. Some of the words are used more regularly in the singular form in different, but related meanings – this will be mentioned where relevant, as the familiarity of the singular forms may sometimes affect and evoke ’extended’ uses of the SFs where they may not be expected. When the bipartite sense

seems marginal among the tokens found in the corpora, only the instances where the reference is undisputably to the bipartite object will be taken into account.

The term ”*s*-form” (in contrast to ”bare form”) is used in the analysis for the words when the *s*-ending is present, when there is the need to include cases in which singularity is indicated with the definite article in spite of the form with –s (e.g. *a scissors*).

When only a small number of instances of a given sense of the SF are found, I will list them all and discuss the possible reasons for the use of the marked form. When examples of a sense of the SF are numerous, I will present an illustrative sample of them. The examples taken from the corpora are numbered from 1 through 104.

4.1 Words denoting garments

Of the garment nouns, *shorts*, *tights*, *briefs* and *overalls* are extremely frequent in the *s*-less form as adjectives, from which the garment names have been derived, and *drawer*, *slack* and *trunk* are commonly used in senses removed or unrelated to the garments; hence, these will be excluded from the study. *Corduroys* can be regarded as a clipped form of the phrase *corduroy trousers* and so the SF already carries a related meaning which refers to the material of the garment. This would seem to prohibit the use of the SF in reference to pieces of clothing, and indeed, a search in the two corpora does not contain any instances in which *corduroy* would seem to denote a piece of clothing: the *s*-less form occurs 122 times in BNC and 798 times in COCA, and in all tokens it refers to the material, when the total number for the plural form is 29 in BNC and, 131 in COCA. *Flannels* is another example from a bipartite noun derived from the name of the material, but the ’garment’ sense appears to be less established, as the PF according to OED may refer to ”flannel goods in general”, in addition to ”underclothes made of flannel”. Most of the instances of the PF in the corpora do refer to garments, but references to ’flannel goods’ are found as well:

> [1] We just (pause) sort of stuck cold flannels all over them (BNC, 1992 KBW S_conv)
>
> [2] Toss a variety of throw cushions on sofas, chairs, even the floor. Cable-knit wools, cotton flannels, and fleecy fabrics beckon you to snuggle. (COCA, 2009 MAG: Redbook)

Breeches, and its AmE variant *britches*, originally denotes a non-bipartite garment covering the loins and thighs, and the singular form was used until the 15th century; nowadays, however, it is always used in the plural (OED, s.v. *breech*). A search in the corpora confirms that the s-ending is retained even in premodification (*breeches maker*, *britches pocket*), and no instances of the *s*-less forms in reference to clothing are found.

This preliminary selection leaves 9 garment names, which will be included in the analysis: *trousers, pants, jeans, bloomers, panties, pyjamas/pajamas* and *knickerbockers/knickers*.

4.1.1 *Trousers*

In present-day English *trousers* denotes two-legged garments worn by both sexes and usually extending from the waist to the ankles (OED, s.v. *trousers*). Although the OED entry is for the plural form, it is mentioned that in addition to the attributive usage the SF occurs "in various senses", and in the attributive position, the word is "more usually" in the singular form. The OED does not elaborate on this, however, and the most recent example given dates back as far as 1885:

> I have scarcely a decent trouser in my wardrobe. (1885, R. L. Stevenson & F. Stevenson Dynamiter i. 2)

Separately, the OED lists a sense for *trouser* denoting one half of a garment. However, both examples given are from the same author, and in both the word is used figuratively:

> (a) A little palm near had its one slender leg draped in an impromptu Turkish trouser, made out of an amber handkerchief. (1893, M. Cholmondeley Diana Tempest v)

(b) One melancholy Scotch fir embarrassed by its trouser of ivy. 1899, M. Cholmondeley Red Pottage ix)

Trousers, in the plural form, is a relatively common word in the BNC, occurring a total of 2113 times. Even usage in a construction with *both*, deemed as unaccebtable by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 341), is not unheard of:

> [3] *Both trousers* are cut to be loose fitting and this is a tremendous benefit for the fair skinned in hot climates. (1991 CG1W_pop_lore)

Aside from attributive usage, the singular form occurs 18 times in the BNC. There are 5 examples from 3 different texts in which the SF clearly refers to one half of a garment. One of these texts is a medical publication in which the terms *trouser* and *trouser leg* seem to be used in free variation, perhaps in order to avoid excess repetition of the word *leg*. In the last sentence the use of the SF may also arise from the coordination with *sock and shoe*:

> [4] The patient puts the sock on his hemiplegic foot, then pulls the trouser leg on up over the knee, and then puts the shoe on the foot. [--] The hemiplegic leg is then lifted back to the floor, the trouser leg is pulled a little further up the thigh [--] He holds the trouser tightly outwards as he puts the unaffected leg into it, [--] The trouser, sock and shoe come off the hemiplegic leg last. (1991 AS0 W_non_ac_medicine)

Furthermore, *trouser* signifying a trouser leg occurs once in a travel guide [5] and twice in a work of fiction [6]:

> [5] The boots are finished with a long, broad ribbon that is wrapped around the ankle, being raised to go over the join of boot and trouser if there is a danger of wet snow going down inside. (1991 A6T W_misc)

> [6] His trouser was torn, and there was blood on his fingers [--] She must have looked down at the dog, and seen the blood stain and the tear on his trouser. (1991 CLD W_fict_prose)

It is noteworthy that in [5] the reference is not exactly to one half of a pair of trousers, but more specifically to the part of the garment where it meets the ankle. It may also be argued that in [6] the author is avoiding the phrase *trouser leg* (or *trouser cuff*) for the sake of symmetry when the noun is being coordinated with another singular one-word noun (*boot and trouser*). While the reference in [6] is clearly to one half of a garment, the use of the

unmarked form *trousers* would perhaps also be possible without a difference in meaning.

In 8 instances altogether the reference of the SF may be regarded as the 'species' sense. There is one example from spoken language, from a recorded conversation, where the nonindividuality is made explicit by the word *type*:

> [7] Yeah they have, but there was people the other night with that type trouser on and boots (1992 KE6 S_conv)

One instance of 'species *trouser'* comes from a joke book:

> [8] FRANKLY, I DO N'T CARE IF YOU BUY ME OR NOT THESE ARE A VERY CASUAL TROUSER SIR (1991 CHR W_misc)

Of the remaining 6 tokens, then, 2 are from magazines [9] and 4 from newspapers [10], all from articles on fashion:

> [9] The top is a pullover half zip with appliqued back logo and retails for 44.99, while the trouser is 34.99. (1992 CKM W_pop_lore)

> [10] At Harrods, the dressy, multi-purpose trouser has virtually replaced black leggings as the easy summer option. (AK6 W_newsp_brdsht_nat_misc)

Finally, There are 5 tokens with the SF not falling under the previous two categories in the BNC. In an excerpt from a spoken text where the language is heavily colloquial, the exact reference is difficult to determine:

> [11] Cmes out (unclear)2. (SP:PS54L) (unclear) waist look exactly with my waistcoat, look. (SP:PS6U2) Oh yeah, what happened, hold out a trouser missing. (pause) it rust (unclear) the back, the back bit. (KPE S_conv)

On two occasions the reference is to an individual garment. In [12], *trousers* and *jeans* are systematically used in the unmarked form later on in the excerpt. As this is an instance of spoken language (court transcript), the use of the marked form may possibly be merely a "slip of the tongue":

> [12] Did you have to assist to get his trouser on? (SP:PS48C) Yes, that's right yes. (pause) He still stayed on the floor, he was still handcuffed. But er we found a Pair of jeans (pause) er and having made sure that the jeans were empty of anything, er we sort of shuffled himself into the jeans a he lay down and we pulled, I I pulled the jeans up. (SP:JJWPSUNK) By the time you had arrested him or (pause) put his trousers on. (1993 JJW

S_courtroom)

In [13], then, the reason behind the marked form may lie in the phrase *the leg of his trouser*, perhaps being used analogously to *trouser leg*:

> [13] There was a stain on his suede shoe and another on the leg of his trouser. (1990 FNU W_fict_prose)

In two examples of *trouser* from the author Terry Pratchett (in two separate works of fiction), the SF is being used in the manner of a mass noun:

> [14] Beyond the great sweep of blue trouser and the distant clouds of sweater was a beard. (1992 CEU W_fict_prose)

> [15] There were huge boots, great sweeps of trouser, a mountain range of jacket and, far above, the distant gleam of electric light on a bald head. (1990 HTH W_fict_prose)

In the COCA, the PF *trousers* renders altogether 3470 tokens, and the SF *trouser* a total of 51 which can be considered to represent the non-attributive usage of the noun. One half of a garment is being referred to in 9 instances. All but one of these are from works of fiction. One example, then, is from Rolling Stone magazine and seems to be a direct quotation from an interview:

> [16] And he was as curious about why this wardrobe person was using a certain kind of Scotch tape on the hem of the trouser to whatever light or lens or where I put the camera. (1992 MAG RollingStone)

In at least one case the reference is specifically to the lower part of a trouser leg:

> [17] He remembered to keep his knee below desk level when he crossed his leg, to not let skin show between trouser and sock. (2015 FIC LiteraryRev)

Equally clearly the reference is to “the whole half” of a garment in the following :

> [18] He let urine flow and breathed a sigh of relief, then was filled with disgust as it ran down his leg, soaking the trouser and the sock, seeping into his boot. (2009 FIC Bk:FarawayWar)

Presumably, in the following example, the reference of the SF is to a trouser pocket:

> [19] Then he fished in his trouser and brought out a key, four inches long, as black as the door and older looking. (1991 FIC KenyonRev)

In the species sense *trouser* occurs a total of 39 times in the COCA. 19 of these come from

magazine articles - 11 from the same publication, namely Harper's Bazaar. This is not particularly surprising as Bazaar - as described on their publisher's website - "focuses strictly on fashion and beauty" (Internet reference 1), whereas other magazines contained in COCA, such as Esquire and Cosmopolitan - deal with a wider range of men's and/or women's issues. In all these cases the SF could be substituted with the PF without a change in meaning.

Of the 39 instances of 'species *trouser'* in COCA, 13 (⅓ of all tokens) come from spoken texts. This would seem to indicate that this usage is slightly more common in spoken language, as spoken language comprises ⅕ of the texts in COCA in total. All instances appear to be from TV programmes discussing fashion and clothing styles:

> [20] So we like the idea of a great fitting leather jacket and a wide-leg trouser, OK? (2004 SPOK NBC_Today)
>
> [21] And I think it's great to take this equestrian feel, a great tweed jacket, Chesterfield collar, a black trouser, and just add an accessory like a scarf. (1997 SPOK NBC_TodaySat)

In 4 instances of non-attributive *trouser* the source text is a newspaper. The articles in question seem very similar as regards content to the ones found in fashion magazines:

> [22] Wider khaki trouser with a Katharine Hepburn drape to it . (2006 NEWS Chicago)

One instance, again from Harper's Bazaar magazine, is very similar to the 'species' examples, but upon closer scrutiny it seems that the reference is to trousers in general ('generic reference') rather than a certain type or style:

> [23] I welcome the return of the universally flattering wider leg like an old dependable friend. " Even my friends who are tiny feel a bit self-conscious in skinny jeans, " says Anlo cofounder Jenna Andreola. " The trouser is a more empowering pant. "(2007 MAG HarpersBazaar)

In addition, 3 instances can be found in COCA where *trouser* possibly refers to a specific piece of clothing. In [24], the word is coordinated with another, singular noun, which may result in the use of the SF:

> [24] He was wearing his best jerkin and trouser: they weren't new or even first-hand, but they were clean and unpatched (1994 FIC FantasySciFi)

In the following spoken language example from an NBC tv programme, it is debatable whether the reference is to a specific garment or of the 'species' kind - the context, at least, is that of fashion - but interestingly, the SF is used although there is another bipartite garment name (*tights*) in the unmarked form in the immediate context. This could be taken to suggest that *tights* is not used in the SF, even nonindividually, but it also conveys a distinction of reference between a word in the PF (generic, referring to any member of the class of 'running tights') and SF (species sense, referring to some specific style of garment):

> [25] Now sneakers, so huge, Savannah. I mean, we see them on absolutely everyone-- whether you're wearing running tights or you're wearing a suit, and we have a photo of Kim Kardashian here in New York wearing them and, you know, with running tights and then Karlie Kloss wearing them with a trouser. (2015 SPOK: NBC)

Finally, in an excerpt from the script for Bean - The Movie (1997), the SF refers to the individual garment worn by the protagonist:

> [26] BEAN turns back to the sink to hide his trousers, as the man swiftly does his hands, goes to the paper dispenser, and takes the last towel. Damn again. 2/ BEAN now puts his hope in a rolling towel. But it's rather high. He has to jump to try to reach the trouser. (1997 FIC: Bean)

In conclusion, the instances of the 'species' sense in the BNC and COCA amount to 8 and 39, respectively; this correlates approximately with the sizes of the corpora, indicating that this usage would be equally frequent in both varieties; however, without exact information on how numerous fashion-related texts are in each corpora, such conclusions cannot be drawn definitively. The 'species' usage would indeed seem to be characteristic of 'fashion speak', and found primarily in newspaper and magazine articles, whereas the 'one half', 'mass noun' and generic senses of the SF occur usually in fictional texts.

4.1.2 *Pants*

As mentioned in 2.1.1 above, while *trousers* and *pants* may be regarded as synonyms in AmE, in BrE *pants* usually refers to underpants. Nevertheless, many instances of *pants* in the BNC

do refer to trousers and not underwear, especially in phrases such as *ski pants* or *jogging pants*. The SF, however, occurs only once as a non-attributive noun in BNC, in an advertisement for Adidas products in the TennisWorld periodical. This is a case of the 'species' sense:

> [27] The matching terry pant is £27.99. (1992 CKM W_pop_lore)

OED does not discuss the SF *pant*, but does mention that, interestingly, *pants* may sometimes act as a singular noun with singular concord. This usage originates from, and is chiefly used, in Caribbean English:

> One was a black terylene and wool, one pants was a black serge and one pants was a light-grey terylene wool. (OED, s.v. *pants*)

As regards the noun as a premodifier, according to OED, *pants* behaves differently from *trousers* in that it retains the s-ending: *pants leg*, *pants pocket*. Both forms are, however, found in the attributive position in COCA. For example, *pant leg/legs* give 363 hits altogether, while *pants leg/legs* only 163. *Pant cuff/cuffs* gives 26 tokens, while *pants cuff* only 6 (and *pants cuffs* none at all). One example even has *pant clips* and *pants clips* in the same immediate context:

> Metal pants clips from Inline, $2.99 # Pant Clips: These handy items help keep clothes grease-free, although some think rubber bands work just as well. (COCA 2006 NEWS: Chicago SunTimes)

This suggests that speakers are indeed familiar with the SF, which, in a similar manner as with *trouser*, could possibly give rise to "extended" usage of the singular form.

The COCA, as expected, gives a number of tokens - 46 altogether - for non-attributive *pant*. There are three instances where *pant* refers to one half of a garment: two from magazines and one from a newspaper. In [28], where the topic is fishing, the contrast between the PF (referring to 'both halves') and the SF (the lower part of the pant leg) can be detected:

> [28] The pants have an adjustment strap near the ankle, but I also use a second homemade strap that secures with Velcro and tightens the pant around the boot. (1993 MAG OutdoorLife)

[29], too, discusses clothing designed for a specific activity (skiing) and has the SF specifically in reference to the lower part of the pant leg:

> [29] Both the internal and external cuffs may be adjustable, and a grippy hem material will help keep the pant in place. (1998 MAG Skiing)

The one instance from a newspaper is from an article on consumer behaviour, in a context where a men's designer fashion store is being discussed:

> [30] Has the crease in your suit pant been rained away? No problem. They'll put it back. While you wait. (1990 NEWS USAToday)

At first glance, the ratio of spoken/written language in the 42 instances of 'species' *pant* found in COCA is approximately the same as with *trouser*: roughly a third of them - 13 instances - represent spoken language. These are all from fashion-related TV programmes:

> [31] So here we have Shayna showing us sort of the more modern version of the culotte. That looks more like a pant and a skirt. (2015 SPOK NBC)

> [32] And you want to wear this with a slim pant if you're wearing a cropped trench. (2007 SPOK CBS_Early)

Of the remaining 29 instances, then, all but one are from magazine texts. It should be noted that these represent only 17 individual texts, with the form occurring more than once in 4 of them. Again, some are very advertisement-like and quote prices of items [33], while some discuss clothing styles more generally [34, 35]:

> [33] Pair these sexy brown wedges -- just $31 -- with a wide-leg pant and Fair Isle knit. (2011 MAG Cosmopolitan)

> [34] While boxers were once an old standby, they bunch up under a slim-fitting pant and aren't as supportive for the gym-going guy. (2007 MAG Cosmopolitan)

> [35] The five-pocket pant is the most flattering and functional of all a man's trousers. (2014 MAG Esquire)

Again, sometimes *pant* is used outside the medium of fashion magazines when referring to sportswear. Here, interestingly, the PF is found in the same context, in reference to a type:

> [36] He also wears the Free Climb Condor pants as an all-purpose outdoor pant for everything from rock climbing to day hiking. (1995 MAG Backpacker)

One instance of 'species' *pant* comes from a newspaper article on different brands of jeans. Here, presumably, the PF is used in *Dockers pants*, as the reference is to not one but several types:

> [37] When sales of Dockers pants began slipping several years ago, the company faced an unsettling irony: The brand that had reached prominence as the default pant for Baby Boomers was losing its edge as its customers approached their middle years. (1997 NEWS SanFranChron)

In six instances *pant* can be considered as having specific, individual reference. Assuming that in [38] the reference is to clothing (this is unclear from the context), it should be noted that the topic of conversation is not fashion but the character of a person:

> [38] Well, look at this great pant he gave me. (2014 SPOK NBC)

In [39], as well, *pant* occurs in a description of a person and not in a fashion-related context. Here, the coordination with *blouse* might have motivated the use of the SF:

> [39] I remember the heavyset woman well, her matching blouse and pant of some artificial peach fabric. (2013 MAG MotherJones)

Pant behaves thus in much the same manner as *trouser* in the material, appearing most often in texts dealing with fashion and in reference to styles and brands.

4.1.3 *Jeans*

The numbers of occurrences for the form *jeans* in the COCA and the BNC are 11818 and 1190, respectively; the relative frequency of the word in COCA is thus roughly twice of that in the BNC. The indefinite article is occasionally found with the *s*-form, although in [40] from COCA, the case may simply be that the article is misplaced:

> [40] I came in this summer a couple of times dressed like that, in a jeans and t-shirt, people say, " Hey' 60s throwback. " (2008 ACAD CommCollegeR)

Similarly to *corduroys*, *jeans* originates from the word *jean*, referring to a type of material from which clothing is manufactured (OED, s.v. *jean*). However, unlike in the case of *corduroys*, the usage in reference to the material has become rare in present-day English

(having perhaps been replaced by *denim*) and a search in the COCA and the BNC retrieved no instances in which *jean* would refer to the material outside of the phrase *jean jacket*, which gives 96 hits in COCA and 3 in BNC – outnumbered by the word pair *denim jacket* (218 hits in COCA and 22 in BNC). Instead, in the COCA, six tokens were found, where the SF is used in reference to garments made from such material. Four of them are from written texts (three magazines and one newspaper), all referring to a brand or style of jeans, i.e. representing 'species' usage:

> [41] Here's a blue jean, basically, that you can wear climbing, bouldering, or to tai chi, etc., and it doesn't bind or restrict like Levi's. (2004 MAG: National Geographic)
>
> [42] Alexander McQueen dark jean, $475, available at Saks Fifth Avenue. (2011 MAG: Essence)
>
> [43] While coming up with witty headlines (' Beanies, Baby!') and justifying the existence of an $1,800 melon-pink cashmere sweater emblazoned with a skull (' adds a touch of rebellion under a blazer!'), I witnessed firsthand the emergence of the premium jean. (2008 NEWS: New York Times)
>
> [44] Sienna Miller Jessica Simpson and Vanessa Hudgens, meanwhile, are jumping on a 1980s fad: the ripped jean. (2008 MAG: Harpers Bazaar)

Three instances of the SF, then, come from two spoken texts, both discussing specific types of garment. Again, in [45], the PF in the immediate context is used to denote not "several individuals" but rather "several types":

> [45] STORM: This is cute. OK, good. Here's our next look. Which is, again, the skinny jean, which, I think some people thought was going to go away, but it has some staying power. Ms-COLES: The skinny jean is definitely back. There's a lot of new jeans on the market this summer. (2007 SPOK: CBS_Early)
>
> [46] Ms-STAFFORD: Well, we have got it here and then with Janet, what we did with Janet, we got the trouser leg jean. (2007 SPOK: NBC_Today)

Unsurprisingly, the four written examples come from magazine or newspaper articles related to fashion or activity clothing, and the two spoken texts are from TV programmes discussing clothing styles – furthermore, the speakers in the examples in question appear to be fashion journalists. In all six texts the SF refers specifically to a type or style of jeans (the 'species

sense') instead of an individual pair. Thus, unlike with *trouser* and *pant*, no tokens with 'one half' reference were found in the corpora. Interestingly, *jeans* appears to often retain the –s ending even when acting as a premodifier: the phrases *jeans pocket/pockets*, for example, occur 95 times altogether in COCA and 10 times in BNC. Thus, the singular usage of the words could merely be the result of analogy to *trouser* and *pant* in terms of the 'species' sense, and appears to be restricted to fashion-related contexts, not being particularly frequent in those either. The usage of the SF does not appear to extend to additional senses of the singular forms. One reason for this could be the existence of the homonymous proper noun Jean.

4.1.4 *Bloomers*

Bloomers originates from the surname Bloomer (Wickens 1992, 120). It is a somewhat old-fashioned term for certain type of women's undergarment; contrary to *trousers* and *pants*, this definition appears under the SF of the word in the OED, with the mention that it is used "regularly" in the plural. Wickens (1992, 120) points out that the reference is different in the SF, which usually denotes 'a bloomer hat'. The plural form appears 90 times in COCA and 25 times in the BNC in reference to clothing. The BNC contains no tokens with the SF denoting a garment, but although the SF of the word is regularly (in the vast majority of the 326 tokens for *bloomer* in COCA) used in the sense of 'someone/something that blooms', either literally or figuratively, one instance of *bloomer* in reference to bipartite garments can, however, be found in COCA:

> [47] She asserts that dress histories have inflated the bloomer's presence as an acceptable garment. (2012 ACAD JournalAmerican)

[47] is noteworthy in that the source text is an academic journal. The reference here is of the generic kind, i.e. to an entire category of garments.

4.1.5 *Pyjamas/pajamas*

Pyjamas or *pajamas* (AmE) are originally loose trousers worn by both sexes in Middle Eastern and Asian countries, but in present-day English the word has come to usually denote nightclothes comprised of trousers and a top (OED, s.v. *pyjamas*). Thus, in the principal modern sense of the word a different kind of 'bipartiteness' is entailed. Nevertheless, the noun behaves like the other bipartite garment words, although it is mentioned in the OED that it is occasionally used in the singular. Two examples of this are given; interestingly from the point of view of the present study, both contain nonindividual reference. In (a) the referent is a type, whereas (b) would fall into Wickens' category of "miscellaneous [nonindividual] senses":

> (a) The pattern for this month..is a combination nightgown, or lady's 'pyjama'. (1886 Girl's Own Paper 23 Oct. 59/1)
>
> (b) This ideal pyjama is made of a very soft washing cotton. (1932 Barker's Spring Catalogue)

Pyjamas gives 376 hits in the BNC. In the AmE spelling *pajamas* it occurs twice. *Pyjama,* then*,* appears 62 times in the BNC as a premodifier in phrases like *pyjama bottoms* and *pyjama party*, but also twice in non-attributive position. *The perfect pyjama* in [48] similar to (b) above in that the reference is to an idea at a distance from the individual, but not a particular species or class:

> [48] Others split the atom, Dad split crotches. Others sought the Holy Grail, Dad stalked the earth in pursuit of the perfect pyjama. (1989 G2V W_pop_lore)

In [49], from *Country Living* magazine in the context of the description of a doll, *pyjama* is treated as a mass noun, resulting in the use of the SF:

> [49] Her grandfather carved it from a single piece of pear wood; its arms and legs are made of string, its shirt is just an old scrap of pyjama. (1991 BMD W_pop_lore

In COCA, the word is found 92 times in the BrE spelling and 2132 times in the AmE spelling. In the singular, it occurs 7 times non-attributively. On two occasions the SF is used to create a

rhyme: in the title of a children's book, *Llama llama red pajama*, and in a poem which contains the following lines:

> [50] You needn't look too far to see # My feelings for Osama. # Just take a peek beneath the flap # In back of my pajama (2001 NEWS: Washington Post)

On two occasions, *pajama* is used in its original sense of 'loose trousers':

> [51] He had the same saffron panjabi and white pajama that I had seen him wearing ten years ago. (2011 FIC: India Currents)

> [52] Amit wore a kurta pajama, a long, cream jacket, pants and pointy " genie shoes, " Sangita said with a laugh. (2001 NEWS: San Francisco Chronicle)

The corpus findings thus reinforce the fact that each variety of English favours its own version of the spelling almost exclusively, but also that occasional use of the SF is allowed in both.

4.1.6 *Panties*

Panties nowadays usually refers to women's underwear, and for this sense the usage in the singular is mentioned separately in the OED; a typical example of the 'species' sense from *New York Times*, is given:

> A new form of undergarment... The bottom is fashioned on the order of the French panty, both long and full enough for utmost comfort. (OED, s.v. *panties*)

Wickens (1992, 136) finds *panties* "curious" in terms of plurality as it is typically a legless garment; however, the "retention of the *s*-ending" can here be attributed to "possibility of opposing movement" rather than any extending parts. The word appears to be significantly more frequent in AmE than BrE: a search on the PF renders 64 tokens in the BNC and 1398 in COCA. The bare form, then, occurs by far the most often as a premodifier in the phrase *panty hose*; this accounts for 281 of the 390 tokens containing *panty* in COCA. The BNC contains one instance of the non-attributive singular form in this sense; here, the "distance

from the individual garment" is quite explicit and the reference is to a species [53]:

> [53] Many a Latino bosom and loin is now adorned with peekaboo lacework and crotchless panty. (CAK W_non_ac_polit_law_edu)

In COCA, examples of the SF used non-attributively amount to 15, from 9 different texts, 2 of these spoken and 7 written. Two of these can be regarded as 'fashion-speak', discussing a brand or style of underwear:

> [54] Her latest product is the ButtBooster, a panty that lifts the buttocks to accentuate curves. (1995: NEWS: New York Times)

> [55] Try Spanx Higher Power High Waisted Power Panty ($34, Nordstrom), which slims your midriff, tummy, butt, and thighs. (2007 MAG: Good Housekeeping)

In the following, *panty* has individual reference and occurs repeatedly in coordination with *bra*, and subsequently on its own as well:

> [56] Dizzyingly pretty, she held up underwear on a hanger -- a two-piece, leopard skin bra and panty, skimpier than a bikini. [--] The girl held the leopard panty and bra over the top of the half-door [--] She squinted into the looking glass as if she were aiming, then she held up a second bra and panty the glossy, ice-glazed color of raspberry sherbet. Her other hand held the strap of a pink, quilted-cloth purse that clashed with the bra and panty, but he figured normally the underwear would be out of sight. Stretched across the front of her tights, the black-and-gold spotted panty was narrow as a strip of gift wrap ribbon. (2014 FIC: TexasReview

[57], too, involves coordination, but here the reference is generic:

> [57] If it's a bra and panty, I always hated a two-piece. That's a two-piece. I don't like a two-piece because it looks like a bra and a panty. (2015 SPOK: ABC)

Like *pajama*, *panty* is also found when there is a need for rhyme:

> [58] Got a bug in your rug? # An ant in your panty? # Need a shoulder to blub? # Write to Shanti ki Aunty. (2003 FIC: Trikone Magazine)

The findings thus seem to correlate to what is said in the OED in that the use of the SF is by no means extraordinary. Only two of the 10 texts containing *panty* in COCA are fashion-related; the remaining 8 are fictional and the word has individual reference in most of them.

4.1.7 *Knickers/knickerbockers*

Originally a proper name, *knickerbockers* are "[l]oose-fitting breeches, gathered in at the knee, and worn by boys, sportsmen, and others who require a freer use of their limbs"; the singular form is used "rarely" (OED, s.v. *knickerbocker*). The word, in the garment sense, is very infrequent in the corpora, rendering 19 hits in COCA and 10 in the BNC for the plural form, and none for the singular. *Knickers,* then*,* is a contracted form of *knickerbockers*, but the meaning has shifted in present-day English; it now usually refers to underwear worn by women and children; usage of the singular is deemed "occasional" (OED, s.v. *knickers*). It is more commonly used in BrE: The BNC lists 351 instances of the PF, and the COCA, a total of 270. However, the only cases, two in total, of non-attributive *knicker* are found in COCA. In [59] the reference is of the 'species' kind, and in [60] the word is used in the manner of a mass noun:

> [59] -- this knicker's mix of performance and classic styling makes it the ideal pant for pedaling a high-end custom bike. (2011 MAG: Bicycling)
>
> [60] The dress rode over her thighs anyway, a pale triangle of knicker showing through the crotch of her tights when she sat down but she said nothing. (2002 FIC: Literary Review)

The referent in [59] is a sports garment; as seen above in the case of *pant* in particular, the usage of the SFs in a nonindividual sense is typical of magazine texts related to hobbies and activities.

4.2 Words denoting tools and instruments

Scales as a weighing device has lost its bipartite nature in the course of time, and the usage of the SF can no longer be considered as unusual, as mentioned in 2.1.2 above. The same applies to *cutters* and *clippers*, which may refer to any kind of cutting and clipping

instrument, often non-bipartite, as exemplified by modern, electronic hair clippers. *Snippers,* which is an approximate synonym to *scissors* (OED, s.v. *snipper*) is quite an infrequent word, the PF occurring only 5 times in COCA, and in the BNC none at all. The SF is found in neither corpora in this sense. *Secateurs* are "a kind of pruning shears with crossed blades"; the OED entry is for the plural form and the use of the singular is marked "rare" (OED, s.v. *secateurs*.) The tokens containing the PF in the BNC and COCA amount to 54 and 10, respectively; this suggests that the word is primarily a BrE term; however, it appears in neither corpora in the singular. *Nutcrackers*, then, can on the basis of the OED entry be regarded as similar to *snuffers* and *trimmers*, in that the SF and PF refer to different instruments (non-bipartite and bipartite, respectively).

Bellows is a problematic case among the instrument names, as it is bipartite in nature in only one of its senses: the 'core' meaning listed by the OED is an instrument used for furnishing a blast of air usually consisting of a bag and box, and the bipartite version is a hand-operated instrument used for blowing a fire (OED, s.v. *bellows*). Thus, the word differs somewhat from the other tool and instrument words semantically, in that a notion of seizing or gripping is not conveyed. In fact, *bellows* could possibly be regarded as "reversely" bipartite, as the plurality derives from the two handles present in some types of instrument. A search in the corpora demonstrates that the s-ending is not dropped even in the attributive position; furthermore, the s-form is regularly used with singular concord [61]:

> [61] My box bellows is a hybrid cross of very old Japanese and Chinese bellows designs. (BNC 1992 EFH W_instructional)

The remaining six tool words from Huddleston and Pullum's list (*scissors*, *tweezers*, *pliers*, *tongs*, *forceps* and *shears*) shall be analysed more thoroughly below.

4.2.1 *Scissors*

Scissors is a relatively frequent word in the corpora, appearing a total of 2364 times in COCA

and 418 in the BNC. According to OED, *scissors*, denoting an instrument used for cutting, usually appears in its plural form with plural concord. Some examples of the SF in reference to a pair of scissors are given, however. The most recent example given in OED is from a book on spine surgery; interestingly, in the same sentence another noun denoting an arguably bipartite instrument (*forceps*) appears in the *-s* form, but with the singular indefinite article *a*:

> [62] The surgeon usually dissects the pleura and vessels using a forceps in the nondominant hand and a scissor in the dominant hand. (OED, s.v. *scissors*)

It is also mentioned in the OED that the form *scissors* is occasionally used in the manner of a countable noun, with singular concord, as in the example sentence *Get me a scissors* from Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847). This type of usage is not mentioned in connection with most of the other tool nouns. Of course, it is not always possible to determine from the context whether countability is implied, e.g. when there is no indefinite article and the word is the object of the sentence, as in *He picked up the scissors*. However, *a scissors* (non-attributive) is found twice in the BNC and 42 times in COCA:

> [63] I could just see myself like some old peg,
> a scissors that has lost its middle screw (BNC 1992 FS5 W_fict_poetry)

Figurative usage of the word in this form exists as well, in reference to a certain tactical move in rugby, where "a player running diagonally takes the ball from a teammate and changes the direction of the attack" (OED, s.v. *scissors*); three instances of this can be found in the BNC, all from newspaper articles on sports events, as in [64]:

> [64] Strett soon afterwards worked a scissors with Hunter who raced clear of the cover for a try. (AA7 W_newsp_brdsht_nat_sports)

In the BNC, five instances of non-attributive *scissor* can be found. Two, in both of which the reference is to household instruments, are from spoken texts. In [65], there is a contrast between the PF (individual reference) and SF (nonindividual; premodified by *every*):

> [65] And shouldn't you, you've done the spare kitchen scissors good! (SP:PS04U) They're my sewing scissors! (SP:PS04Y) I say! (SP:PS04U) Every sewing scissor I get in this house -- (1991 KBF S_conv)

[66], then, has the SF in reference to a type:

> [66] I'm cutting grass there now but it's cold today I cut that (unclear) with a big scissor like this. (1987 HEU S_interview_oral_history)

In the three tokens from written texts, then, the referent is a piece of professional equipment. In [67] from *Clothes Show* magazine, as well as in [68] (from the magazine *Hair Flair*) the SF refers to a pair of hairdresser's scissors. [67] may be considered as generic reference, whereas typically for the 'species' sense, [68] mentions the name of a brand:

> [67] With such a lot riding on the snip of a scissor, it's not surprising that the breast beneath the hairdresser's gown is heaving with unrealistic expectations and conflicting emotions of hope and fear. (1991 A7N W_pop_lore)

> [68] International haircutter Terence Renati has teamed up with Japanese craftsmen to create the Terence Renati Scissor. (CGP W_pop_lore)

In [69], again from a magazine text (*Dogs Today*), the topic is the grooming of a pet. This could, however, be a spelling error as the indefinite article is absent:

> [69] Lie your dog on his back and, holding one paw at at time, carefully trim away the excess hair with sharp, but round-ended scissor held flat against the pads. (1992 C8U W_pop_lore)

An interesting point about *scissors* is that when used attributively, it seems to drop the –s ending in some combinations, but not in others: the OED lists *scissor blade* and *scissor hold*, but also *scissors grip*, the phrases *scissors kick* and *scissors jump* from the domain of sports, and *scissors crisis*, which refers to a specific period in the history of the Soviet Union; a metaphor drawn from the disparity between industrial and agricultural prices (OED, s.v. *scissors*). Examples of all these are found in the corpora. Of the tool words discussed here, *scissors* would thus appear to have the most variation between the *s*-form and the one without the *s*-ending, both occurring as a countable noun and as premodifiers. Nevertheless, the same tendency as with the other nouns to use the SF (without the *–s*) in specialised language (in this case, hairdresser-speak) can be observed.

4.2.2 *Tweezers*

OED defines *tweezers* as ”small pincers or nippers -- used for plucking out hairs from the face or for grasping minute objects”. According to OED, the word has plural concord, and no mention is made of any usage of the singular form. The word is interesting for the present study because, like *tongs* or *scissors*, it falls (in one of its senses) under the semantic category of tools related to beauty and could potentially render similar results in the corpora. *Tweezers* is not a particularly frequent word even in its PF: a total of 55 hits can be found in the BNC, and 420 altogether in the COCA: the frequency in AmE would on this basis thus appear to be nearly double that of BrE – an observation which could, admittedly, be accounted for by the portion of cosmetics-related magazine articles in each corpus.

In the BNC *tweezer* occurs twice in spoken and twice in written texts. In [70], taken from a market research interview, the speaker recites a lists of objects where, interestingly, all other items are in the plural form – too much emphasis should not be put on this, however, as the utterance is tagged ”unclear”:

> [70] What band is that (unclear)? (SP:PS2B3) That's er two.(SP:PS2B2) And on tweezer (unclear), magnifying glasses, (unclear) accessories and stamp albums. (G5J S_interview)

In [71], from a recorded meeting, the speaker is describing the act of eyebrow shaping and refers to a specific object, i.e. the *pair*-construction would be the more typical choice here. In this example, as the focus is not on the type or model of instrument – in fact, the SF is premodified by the possessive pronoun *our*, and the reference is individual:

> [71] The wax is on for about two minutes, and it takes two seconds to pull it off. And when we pull the wax off, all the hairs are in the wax (pause) so the majority of the hair is out in one pull. Then we use our tweezer to actually shape the eyebrow. (1992 FX6 S_meeting)

The use of the SF in [72], from a text from The Oxford English Programme resembling a tongue-twister poem, is perhaps best explained by coordination:

> [72] Well, some tweezer # Or a theory, " I said, " or a tooth, # Or a tap or a

> till or a thought or a thrill, # Or your trousers, a trestle, the truth. " (1990 G3P W_misc)

[73], then, is noteworthy as an example of 'species' usage of *tweezer* outside the domain of cosmetics; the text is from a book on flower pressing, and the word is used in both PF and SF in the same passage, conveying a contrast between generic (PF) and type (SF):

> [73] Tweezers are a crucial piece of equipment and should be used at all times to handle the pressed material. Flowers are very brittle once pressed and if you try to touch them with your fingers they will be completely ruined, no matter how careful you are. There are several types of tweezer on the market, so experiment with different lengths and shapes to see which suits you best. (1991 CE4 W_misc)

It should perhaps be noted here that the BNC finds no cases of *tweezer* as a premodifier.

In COCA, then, a total of 24 instances of non-attributive *tweezer* can be found, 4 of which in spoken texts. Of the 20 tokens from written texts, which come from women's magazines such as *Essence*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Parenting*, 8 refer specifically to brands of tweezers and are thus typical examples of 'species' usage. In [74] a distinction between individual (PF) and non-individual (SF) reference can be observed:

> [74] Revlon will sharpen dull tweezers (or replace defective ones) for $1. (Revlon Platinum Slant Tip Tweezer, $16) (2006 MAG: Parenting)

Of the remaining 12 tokens from written texts, 5 are straightforward cases of 'generic' rather than 'species' usage in that no specific type or model is referred to, but the reference is to any or all members of the category of tweezers. The source texts include magazine articles on beauty [75] and other fields such as cooking [76]:

> [75] When you need a quick stubble fix, rub your bikini line with alcohol and use a tweezer to pull out only the noticeable hairs. (2004 MAG: Cosmopolitan)

> [76] The most likely place to find a cherry pitter is in a gourmet shop or kitchenware department in some department stores. This handy tool resembles an oversized, hinged tweezer. (1994 MAG: Prevention)

Finally, there are 7 tokens in which the reference is neither generic nor of the 'species' type, but to an individual pair:

> [77] CABLE GUY # (grabs a tweezer) Ooh, I almost forget, it's oh so very important to be properly tweezed. (1996 FIC: Cable Guy, the)

In [78], taken from a medical journal, the possibility exists that the reference is of the ’one half’ kind:

> [78] Here we report the case of a 38 year old man who was admitted to the Emergency Department of a general hospital following an episode in which a tweezer penetrated the victim's chest to the right inferior parasternal area at the fifth intercostal space. (2007 ACAD: Internet Journal of Cardiology)

As regards the senses of the PF of the word, it is difficult to present exact numbers for when the reference is to a tool or a cosmetics instrument, as many of the tokens from the corpora are ambigous in this respect. Nevertheless, it would appear that the sense of ”instrument used for plucking out hairs” accounts for a smaller portion of instances than in the case of the SF. The language of the domain of beauty and cosmetics (where brand names are often discussed) seems, then, to apply the SF more readily than, for example, the fields of philately or medicine, in which the word (in the PF) is also frequently used.

4.2.3 *Pliers*

Pliers are, according to OED, ”Pincers with gripping jaws, usually having serrated surfaces which close flat, used for bending or cutting wire, gripping or turning small objects, etc”. They have plural concord and appear frequently in a construction with *a pair of*; no mention is made of any usage of the singular form (OED, s.v. *pliers*). The PF gives 655 hits in COCA and 66 in the BNC and would thus appear to be twice as frequent in AmE than in BrE; this can, again, be attributed to the nature of texts in the corpora.

Based on Wickens’ observations, of the words denoting tools, *pliers* occurs the most frequently and in the greatest variety in the singular form. Contrary to his findings, however, the singular form renders no hits in the BNC, and only two in the COCA. [79] is interesting in that the PF is used even when denoting a species (even the brand is mentioned), but

subsequently the SF is also applied in a nonindividual sense:

> [79] CRAFTSMAN FORCE-MULTIPLYING PLIERS Squeeze Craftsman's new Switch Pliers and your grip is strengthened as much as eightfold -- it's the first plier to incorporate this vise-like capability. (2002 MAG: Popular Science)

Although an individual object is referred to in [80], the focus is steered away from the actual tool by the use of the SF:

> [80] Ms-STERBENZ: And what I've done is I've started making this curl here. I've used a plier... (1997 SPOK: NBC_Today)

Wickens (1992, 116) also notes that in dentistry, *plier* is not a binary tool name. Interestingly, while the object in that may be physically bipartite, its function differs to that of *pliers*; rather than for seizing and gripping, which is the notion conveyed in bipartite tool names, an orthodontic plier is used for bending and twisting (ibid, 117). Again, the use of the PF appears to be tied to the idea of 'opposing movement' of the two parts and not the binarity of the instrument as such.

4.2.4 *Tongs*

Tongs are "(a)n implement consisting of two limbs or 'legs' connected by a hinge, pivot, or spring, by means of which their lower ends are brought together so as to grasp and take up objects which it is impossible or inconvenient to lift with the hand"; the plural form is the "usual current use", and the use of the SF in this sense is marked obsolete (OED, s.v. *tongs*).

It is also noted in the OED that the word may be used as clipped form of compounds such as *curling tongs.* Semantically this sense of the word is slightly further removed from the notion of "grasping objects", but the idea of "bipartiteness" is retained; as opposed to a *curling wand*, curling tongs typically have a clasp and thus fit the description of an instrument with two opposing and mobile parts as described in 2.1.2 above. On the basis of the BNC, this

sense is relatively common in BrE; *tongs* (as a tool or instrument) gives a total of 77 tokens in the corpus, in 32 of which the reference is to a tool, and in 27 to hair-styling instrument (10 times as *curling tongs* and 17 times without premodification). In 7 instances the word denotes cooking equipment, and another 7 times the word appears in the fixed expression *hammer and tongs*. In OED this phrase is marked ”colloquial” and it is likened with the expression *might and main*, which refers to ”utmost or greatest possible power or strength” (OED, s.v. *might*). The origin of *hammer and tongs* is the image of ”a blacksmith showering his blows on the iron taken with the tongs from the forge-fire” (OED, s.v. *tong*). Interestingly, urbandictionary.com lists this expression as *hammer and tong*; there, it is labelled as Australian slang (internet reference 2). This usage of the SF can, again, be attributed to coordination with a singular countable noun.

The BNC finds 20 hits, two spoken and 18 written, for the SF *tong* used non-attibutively; in all of these instances the reference is to curling tongs. *Hair Flair* magazine accounts for 15 of the 18 examples in written texts [81], while two are from Ideal Home [82] and one from an advertisement in Clothes Show [83], and all refer to types or brands of instrument (’species’ usage). [81] illustrates a contrast between the ’species’ sense (SF) and general, ’non-species’ reference (PF):

> [81] Tongs can be used just as effectively but remember that the larger the barrel, the bigger the curl. BaByliss created their Professional Range Volume Tong specifically for these' just set' styles and Carmen's Salon Professional Curling Tong comes in a choice of inch and inch barrels (1992 CDH W_pop_lore)
>
> [82] The Braun Independent heated up very quickly, but Sarah found it tricky to use the tong without the ends of her hair having a kink. (1991 G2F W_pop_lore)
>
> [83] And now, from around 11.00, the new Independent 500 Tong, Brush and Combi mean that there is a Braun Styler to suit you. And your pocket. (1991 CFS W_advert)

Similarly to how *plier* is singular in the field of orthodontics despite its similarity to the bipartite tool, the use of the SF in barbery and hair-styling may also be related to the function

of the instruments. While the element of ‘gripping’ or ‘seizing’ is present in hair tongs, they are ultimately used for curling and straightening hair, and may not be conceived as inherently bipartite. Perhaps for this reason the form even lends itself for individual reference, as in the one spoken text from the BNC, in which the SF occurs twice:

> [84] (SP:PS09U) I'm gon na bring in a hair tong today (SP:PS09T) A what? (SP:PS09U) A hair tong (1992 KC2 S_conv)

From a search in COCA it becomes evident that *curling tongs* is specifically a BrE expression; of the 764 instances of *tongs* (as a tool or instrument) in the corpus, hair styling equipment is referred to only once. Instead, the word is particularly frequent in texts on cooking, especially in expressions such as *kitchen tongs, sugar tongs* or *barbecue tongs*. The SF occurs in COCA 10 times non-attributively – here, the instances representing spoken language (7) outnumber the ones from written texts (3). In 6 spoken and one written example, the word occurs in the expression *hammer and tong* mentioned above [85]:

> [85] We are going at this hammer and tong, as hard as we possibly can, and it's just going to be awfully difficult, you have to bear with us. (1990 SPOK ABC_Nightline)

Of the three other instances of the SF, two refer to tools [86, 87] and one to kitchen equipment [88]. In [88], the idea of nonindividuality is conveyed by the modifier *better*; in the other two, the use of the SF is a result of coordination:

> [86] Engineers spent a month looking at all the tongs on the market, the shape of the head, the locking mechanism, the tension of the spring. Most were hard on the hand, requiring too much of a squeeze. They set out to fashion a better tong. (1999 NEWS WashPost)

> [87] 20 foot sections of PIPE DRILLING SRTRING [sic] with a HYDRAULIC TONG AND CLAMP (1998 FIC Mov:Armageddon)

> [88] Okay, so this is a Trong. It's like a tripod and a tong, but unlike tongs or a fork or chop sticks, you grip them in line with your fingers so it's very natural and comfortable to pick up food, like chicken wings, barbeque ribs, that you just stand them up and you can take a sip of your beverage between bites, use your phone. (2013 SPOK: NBC)

As mentioned in 2.2.2 above, the ’one half’ usage is taken into account in the case of *tong*

(albeit labelled ”humorous nonce-use”) in the OED; this is, in fact, the only occasion when such usage in present-day English is acknowledged in connection with the tool and instrument words studied here.

4.2.5 *Forceps*

Forceps, then, is potentially interesting as it is featured in both Huddleston and Pullum's and Wickens' lists of bipartites, although it differs grammatically from the other nouns under analysis in that, while it is unquestionably a two-part instrument very similar to *scissors* or *tweezers* (and could actually be regarded as a combination of the two in terms of semantics), it is actually a countable noun with both singular and plural concord: *a forceps*, *two forceps*, *these forceps*. Nevertheless, Wickens provides an example of the *s*-less form *forcep* from an E.A. Beck & Co. catalogue from 1981:

> Our stock number for this new elastic placing mosquito forcep is 500-235 and it currently sells for $19.00 each.

As illustrated in examples [89] and [90] taken from the COCA, it does not drop the *s*-ending even when used attributively:

> [89] You was a forceps baby, huh, kid? (1993 FIC: ShadowBoxer)
>
> [90] She had an forceps burn. (2014 SPOK: ABC)

This would suggest that the *s*-less form would not exist non-attributively, either. And indeed, the bare form gives no hits in either of the two corpora. The *pair*-construction used with bipartites does occur with *forceps*, however: *pair/pairs of forceps* gives a total of 13 hits in the COCA and 2 in the BNC. Thus, while *forceps* cannot truly be considered a'plurale tantum' (contrary to Huddleston and Pullum's view), it is not purely a regular countable noun, either.

4.2.6 *Shears*

Originally synonymous to *scissors*, *shears* is nowadays used of scissors of larger size and other similarly operated cutting instruments, and has "plural construction, either in sing[ular] or plural sense"; the singular form is rarely used of such an instrument (OED, s.v. *shears*). The PF is found 122 times in the BNC and 668 times in COCA. Occasionally it is a verb form or a proper name, but the majority of the tokens have the word as an instrument, always with plural concord. The BNC contains only one instance of the SF in reference to an instrument, in discussion of a particular brand and thus representing 'species' usage:

> [91] For cutting hedges by hand Sandvik's well-balanced Professional Hedge Shear (about 32) has a long reach and cuts very easily and cleanly. (AHK W_newsp_brdsht_nat_misc)

The OED also mentions that nowadays *shears* may refer to various types of machines used for cutting metal. The majority of the occurrences of *shear* in COCA appear to refer to such non-bipartite instruments:

> [92] Alternatively, a CNC shear could do the shearing and a CNC punch press could punch the holes and slots. (2011 ACAD: Mechanical Engineering)

Three examples of the SF denoting a scissor-like tool are found, however. The two different instruments discussed in [93] and [94], respectively, contain the idea of opposable (scissor-like) movement, while in PVC shears [95] only one of the "extensions" is mobile:

> [93] Other tools are designed and marketed for specialized tasks, such as a narrow-bladed bonsai shear – (2011 MAG: Organic Gardening)
>
> [94] -- retired bureaucrats who lived on estates where Nature was systematically submitted to the pruning shear. (1993 ACAD: ReVision)
>
> [95] You can cut them with a hacksaw or do it quicker with a $15 PVC shear. Again, I made a simple jig [--] so I could snip them out quickly with the shear. (1996 MAG: Mother Earth News)

The existence of different degrees of "bipartiteness" and how this is connected to the usage of the singular forms is thus nicely illustrated by the different senses of *shears*: much like with

clippers and *cutters* mentioned in 4.2 above, modern technology has resulted in extended uses of the word further removed from the original bipartite object (retaining only, in some cases, the core meaning of "cutting instrument"), resulting in turn to extended usage of the singular form.

4.3 Words denoting optical devices

In the "optical instruments" category, *glasses* would probably be the most frequently used and thus the most appropriate noun for analysis; however, *glass* is a very frequent word in the sense in which it denotes a substance, it would not be reasonable to inspect the more than 50000 instances of the form in the COCA, for example, in search of references to the instrument, albeit that this usage exists according to Wickens, as mentioned in 2.3.2 above. The word *spectacle,* then*,* in present-day English usually denotes a large-scale display of public nature (OED, s.v. *spectacle*), as evidenced by a look at the tokens given for the word in the two corpora. Interestingly, for this word in the sense of 'optical instrument', the OED lists several examples with the SF; however, the most recent of these is from 1728 and there the reference appears to be to a one-lensed instrument:

> This Membrane, like a Kind of Spectacle, covers the Eye. (1728 E. Chambers Cycl. at Eye)

Clip-ons, then, albeit included in Huddleston and Pullum's (2002, 340) list of bipartite opticals, appears to be used quite seldom in this sense: of the 15 instances of the PF in COCA, an optical instrument is referred to in only two separate texts – most often the word appears to be used of neckties or earrings. Thus, from the category of opticals, *binoculars* and *goggles* are eligible for further corpus analysis.

4.3.1 *Binoculars*

A *binocular*, short for *binocular glass*, according to OED is a ”field-glass or opera-glass in the use of which both eyes are employed in viewing an object”, or a binocular microscope (OED, s.v. *binocular*). Although all the grammars consulted list *binoculars* as a plural-only noun, the OED definition is more lenient as regards the usage of the singular form, saying only that the tendency nowadays is to use the plural form. A total of six example sentences from 1871-1935 are given in the OED, of which only the earliest one contains the singular form of the word:

> I shall keep this binocular. (1871 M. Collins Marquis & Merchant III. iv. 114. (OED, s.v. *binocular*)

In the BNC, the word appears a total of 522 times in the plural form, and twice in the singular form as a non-attributive noun. The source text in [96] discusses types and models of binoculars which motivates the use of the SF (’species’ usage), whereas the PF is used when the reference is to such instruments in general:

> [96] The magnification and objective diameter are usually spelled out in the name of the model of binoculars -- eg: the Acme 8 35 Binocular will make things look eight times bigger and have an objective diameter of 35mm. You may also find it useful to know a binocular's field of view -- usually expressed as the width of the area you can see at a distance of 1000m or 3,280ft. (XXXX CMD W_pop_lore)

[97], then, comes from a work of fiction and contains the word presumably in generic reference. Here, the use of either the PF or the *pair*-construction could perhaps be more typical:

> [97] Salt was a born naturalist and never went out of doors without a binocular to watch the birds. (GTA W_biography)

A search in the COCA, then, finds 3373 instances of the PF, while the SF appears non-attributively 12 times in total, in 6 different texts. It should be noted that as well as the tokens in the BNC, these all refer to field-glass binoculars and not microscopes; the latter sense of the word might perhaps allow more extensive usage of the SF as the ’two-partness’ can be

considered as less of a defining characteristic of the object. All six texts come from magazines: three from *Field & Stream* and two from *Outdoor Life* – both of which focus on hunting and fishing – and one from the astronomy-related publication *Sky & Telescope*. Of these, [98] is possibly the most noteworthy, as the reference is to a specific object rather than nonindividual; however, the speaker of the sentence in question is presumably an experienced hunter and thus routinely discusses objects such as binoculars in a professional fashion, which would evoke the use of the SF:

> [98] i lower my binocular and tell mark as matter of factly as i can, " i'm going to walk down there and kill that deer. " (2010 MAG: Outdoor Life)

The other five instances can be regarded as more straightforward examples of ’species *binocular’*, in that they refer to types and models, as in [99]:

> [99] My scope was a Swarovski AV 3X-10X, and my binocular a Swarovski 10X EL. -- But I'd recommend their 8X binocular with a wider field of view. (2004 MAG: Field & Stream)

It would appear, then, that in non-fictional texts – more specifically, articles in the domain of ”outdoor activities”, the use of the SF in the ’species’ sense is not unusual. In fictional texts and other senses of the word the form is, then, not unheard of but can be regarded as rare.

4.3.2 *Goggles*

Goggles – a word which, according to OED, is rarely used in the singular – are spectacles designed to protect the eyes from dust, light etc. and used especially by motorcyclists and divers (OED, s.v. *goggle*). Two of the 13 example sentences listed in OED contain the singular form used non-attributively; in (a) – taken from *MotorCycle* magazine as early as 1908 – the singularity can be attributed to ’species’ usage and in (b) perhaps with the coordination with the singular noun *lens*:

> (a) A new goggle constructed after the principle of the four-glass goggle.
>
> (b) A disk of hard wood, with a simple slit..we found a better protection

than the goggle or colored lens.

The plural form *goggles* is more than twice as frequent in the COCA as in the BNC, with 1674 and 173 occurrences, respectively. A large portion of the hits in COCA appear to be from magazines related to either science and astronomy or sports activities (skiing and diving): although magazines and periodicals are equally represented in both corpora, the case may be that texts on such specific fields are more numerous in COCA.

The singular form, then, occurs in the BNC in only one text, Ski Club of Great Britain's Ski Survey, where the SF appears twice. This would appear to represent 'species' usage:

> [100] The headband is attached to the frame of the goggle by a link that allows a much freer range of movement than usual. The overall curved profile of this goggle is refreshingly different too. (1991 G2W W_pop_lore)

In the COCA, then, there are 28 instances of non-attributive *goggle*. The vast majority of these – 18 tokens – come from *Skiing* magazine and are all instances of 'species' usage:

> [101] Enter the new F-BOM goggle, which has a transparent, heat-conductive lens laminate that functions like a car's rear-window defroster. (2014 MAG: Skiing)

> [102] WHAT'S THE BEST-VENTILATED GOGGLE ON THE MARKET? (2005 MAG: Skiing)

Among the remaining 10 tokens, there are three references to eyewear used for bicycling, and two for diving. These, too, come from magazine texts. Additionally, there is one reference to night-vision goggles from the manuscript for a TV movie [103], and one example from a science fiction story, where the reference does not become clear from the context [104]; in both cases the reference is individual. These are the only occurrences of the SF in fictional texts in the corpora:

> [103] GARTH'S POV - NIGHTGOGGLES - THE GALLERY OF LIGHT CARVINGS # is unlike the other galleries. The statues glow. They are lifelike, carved by laser light, an intermingling of photography and sculpting, here magnified a thousand times by the goggle's infrared.

> [104] He silently handed over the goggle to John who looked it over and

then held it up to the light. (2003 FIC: Analog Science Fiction & Fact)

Of course, in contrast to swimming goggles which typically have two round lenses, those designed for skiing are usually single-framed and resemble a mask. These two types of object would thus represent, so to speak, different degrees of bipartiteness; when the SF is used it refers, in Wickens' view, specifically to skiing goggles, although the corpus data referenced above does include some instances of other senses of the word.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary and conclusions

In this thesis I have studied the usage of bipartite nouns in two different corpora. From the original intent of discussing the singular forms, the study expanded to an analysis of the senses and frequencies of the words in both the singular and the plural, the usage of the words as premodifiers, and the differences between the OED entries of these words.

The selection of words was made on the basis of Huddleston and Pullum's list of bipartites. The occurrence of the bare form with these words varied from nonexistent to frequent. A problem encountered during the study was that most of the nouns have multiple meanings, and it is not always possible to deduce the reference even with knowledge of the text or context, which prohibits giving exact numbers of the occurrences of a word in a given sense. Any quantitative analysis thus had to be limited to a few individual observations concerning the words that were more straightforward in this respect.

For the most part, the analysis also had to be limited to the words for which a non-bipartite counterpart (of which the SF is used) does not exist, as it cannot always be determined from the context which instrument is being referred to. Furthermore, in some cases it could be argued that several "degrees of bipartiteness" exist in terms of the words in question: *goggles* used in swimming, for example, are more distinctly bipartite than those used by skiers, and the usage of the singular form does indeed appear to be more common in the latter sense, but not unheard of in the former either.

From the data it becomes evident that most of the words are sometimes used in the singular, in both spoken and written language, and in literature as well as newspaper and magazine articles. The most common way in which the singular forms are used is with

nonindividual, especially ‘species’, reference, and it is much more typical of ’specialised’ language: in the case of garments, of the language of fashion magazines and TV programmes related to clothing styles, when referring to a type or style of garment and not an individual piece of clothing – and for *pant* in particular, also when discussing clothing for different activities such as skiing or tennis. *Pyjamas* (or *pajamas*) and *panties* can be thought to represent a different degree of bipartiteness; *pyjamas* consists of two unidentical parts, whereas with *panties*, the plurality is only in the “possibility of opposing movement” and indeed, out of the words studied here, these two nouns are also used in the singular forms the most freely, even to the extent that they can be regarded as countable nouns.

In the case of tools, and especially *scissors*, *tongs* and *tweezers*, the singular forms appear the most often in articles on beauty and hair styling; and, in the case of optical devices, for magazine articles on activities such as hunting, skiing or diving. From the amount of context given for each example in the corpora, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether the text in question is from an article, an advertisement, or something in between the two. Nevertheless, the usage of the SF does seem typical of both in the field of fashion and beauty as well as the language of particular hobbies and activities.

During the course of the analysis it became evident that the various senses of each word ought to be studied more closely. An analysis on *trouser* and *pant* also seems to require some digging deeper into the semantics of the supposedly synonymous pair of words. For example, my data suggests a slight difference in the broadness of meaning between the two nouns which is usually not mentioned in dictionaries, in that *pants* appears to be used of sports garments and clothing designed for specific activities such as fishing (with premodifiers in phrases such as *ski pants* or *yoga pants*, but also without); it is used in this meaning also in BrE, although dictionaries are quick to declare the word to refer to underwear in that variety. This would probably be more noticeable if the unmarked forms were being

studied, but is reflected in the usage of the SFs as well, in spite of the small number of instances found in the material. In the case of *tongs* there appeared to be some regional variation in the different senses of the word; in BrE, it may refer to a hair styling instrument, which became even more evident from the study of the singular forms.

Trouser and *pant* were both occasionally found in the 'one half sense', i.e. referring to a trouser leg or some portion of it. This was not observed in the case of the other garment words, or any of the tool or optical instrument names. The use of the singular with the aim to produce a "mass noun effect" was observed with *trouser*, *pyjama* and *knicker*.

As regards *tong*, the 'species' usage of the singular form appears to be restricted to the BrE expression *curling tongs*, an instrument resembling the tool from which they take their name. On the basis of the corpus data the term is used especially in beauty magazines when discussing brands of these items. Similarly, *scissor* seems to most often denote a piece of hairdresser's equipment, and *tweezer*, an instrument for plucking hairs.
However, examples of the usage of the singular forms outside of these fields can be found for almost all of the nouns being studied here. They exist in spoken texts, as expected, but occasionally in novels or academic journals as well.

In addition to attributive usage and the senses listed by Wickens, the singular forms are occasionally applied to usage outside of these specific senses, in contexts where the use of either the unmarked PF or the *pair*-construction would be typical or expected. From the data it can be observed that the use of the SF may also be triggered when the word occurs in coordination with another singular noun, resulting in phrases such as *bra and panty* or *a tripod and a tong*. In fact, this seems to be the most common explanation for the use of the singular forms outside of the 'species' and 'one half' senses, which perhaps ought not to be overlooked by dictionaries when automatically assigning a 'plural-only' status on a given noun. Speakers also apparently alternate between the singular and plural in order to express a

difference in the generality of reference between the forms: this usage is by no means rare, and suggests that the use of the singular form is indeed a conscious choice. Furthermore, the observation that the singular form may occasionally even be used in playful, literary style when there is a need for rhyme, as in the examples found for *pajama* and *panty*, illustrates that the bare form lends itself to numerous situations outside the most common nonindividual senses.

A relevant question is also whether the frequency of the SF as a premodifier (i.e attributive usage) is related to the usage of the SF in other senses; forms which are frequently used as premodifiers might be "less alien" to the speaker and could thus be used more often in general. *Bellows* was used here as an example of a word which retains the ending in premodification and also occasionally has singular concord and, consequently, does not seem to occur in the *s*-less form at all. While the OED posits that *pants* does not drop the -s ending when used attributively, my corpus data suggests the opposite. Nevertheless, *pant* is used similarly to *trouser* in the 'one half' and 'species' senses, and the relationship between the attributive usage and other senses of the SF could be worthwhile of its own study. However, when the SF of the word is reserved for a different meaning altogether (such as, with words like *corduroys* and *glasses*, for the material the object is manufactured of, or exists as a different word such as *jeans* (garment) vs. *Jean* (proper name), the existence and usage of the SFs in such senses may prohibit their usage in the bipartite sense. Thus, it seems that a certain degree of unambiguity is required for the SFs to be used in these "marginal" senses discussed in this study.

The motivation to research the phenomenon in question arose originally from the observation that the language of fashion and beauty uses the single forms quite commonly and extensively when referring to objects and pieces of clothing in a nonindividual sense, when in standard language the use of the plural form would be the expected choice. Even for *bloomer*,

which is an old-fashioned and relatively rare word, and in the SF is used frequently in an unrelated sense and can, in addition, denote a non-bipartite garment, an instance of the SF in the generic sense was found in the corpus material. The study has shown, however, that while such specialized language may be the origin of such usage, it is not limited to it.

A surprising finding was that, the phenomenon does not seem particularly more common in spoken texts than in written ones. A handful of examples were found, however, where the use of the marked form could be attributed to the fragmented and hesitant nature of spoken language. Overall the phenomenon should nevertheless be characterised as a feature of the language of some special domains, actualised by the 'species' usage in particular, rather than as usage of "erroneous" forms.

Definitions for the words and information on their usage was retrieved from the OED. On the whole, the ways in which the singular forms are used based on the corpus material seem to correspond to the senses listed in OED. It also appears that there is variation within the OED in whether the words are listed as the singular or the plural form. Of the garment words, *trousers* and *pants* are listed in their plural form, whereas *jeans* appears under the entry for *jean*, a word denoting the material, from which the word for the garment has been derived. The tool words *scissors*, *tongs* and *tweezers*, then, appear systematically in the plural form, and the number is commented on as being "usually plural" in the case of *scissors* and *tongs*; for *tweezers*, the OED simply states that the word has "plural concord", while *breeches* is described as "always plural" – indeed *breeches/britches* did not appear in the corpora in their bare form at all. For some words, instances of the SF denoting the object are listed among examples of the PF, while for others, such as *shears*, the SF denoting the object is listed as a sense of its own. The optical instrument words *goggle* and *binocular*, however, are entered in the OED in their singular form; nevertheless, the usage of the singular forms for each is described as rare.

Although the two corpora studied here are seemingly comparable in terms of content, some of the observations made during the course of the study raise the question of whether all domains of language are equally represented: *pliers*, for example, would appear to be twice as frequent in AmE, but any generalisations based upon this would require a closer examination of the nature of the magazine texts in each corpus.

Although the nouns in question - like pluralia tantum in general - appear in the plural form in dictionary entries, and dictionaries as well as grammar books state that they are "only", "usually" or "chiefly" plural, usually not discussing the usage of the singular forms at all, the data studied in this thesis has shown that that is not the whole story. Grammarians wishing to paint a complete picture of language usage - and dictionarians, of the usage of words - could benefit from studies such as this and maybe ought to consider mentioning the single forms and their possible meanings in future works, especially if the usage of the singular forms appears to be on the increase in everyday language. This would be beneficial for foreign learners of English, too, aiming to familiarize themselves with real, idiomatic usage of the language.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

The usage of the singular forms seems to be more or less disregarded by dictionarians, although examples of this can be traced several centuries back. Although the topic of the present study unquestionably is an existing linguistic phenomenon, and a minimally researched one at that, it is relatively marginal so that even from two large corpora such as BNC and COCA it is difficult to go into a quantitative analysis on the frequencies and usage of the singular forms. Therefore, with an even bigger body of material, such a study could perhaps be conducted with the focus more on the frequencies of the words and conclusions could be drawn on whether the usage is increasing. In the case of BrE in particular,

considering that the BNC no longer represents the most recent usage, is smaller in size than the COCA and contains a smaller proportion of spoken texts, a corpus compiled from more recent material with a bigger focus on spoken language might yield interesting results as regards this phenomenon. Another point to consider is that in spoken language phonetic factors, in addition to grammatical ones, may motivate the usage of a given form. Thus, if the marked form is already familiar to a speaker (as a premodifier, for example), the phonetic environment within the phrase or sentence (especially the sounds immediately following the word) could possibly trigger the use of the singular form.

On the other hand, one idea for a further study could be to compile a corpus from professional or specialised texts, such hair and beauty magazines, articles on fashion design and retail, or publications on activities such as skiing or hunting, and investigate the phenomenon on the basis of that data. It might also be fruitful to research whether the nonindividual usage is increasing and spreading from ’specialised’ language to everyday speech and writing.

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